



INTO THE WILD

For a swim with a difference, take your section for a dip in the great outdoors

Illustration: India Pearce

Plenty of people swim in rivers, lakes and canals, but if this is your first time for wild swimming choose an open-water venue. Open-water venues are special areas such as lakes that offer times when you can swim, and some have changing facilities, cafes and even have lifeguards. Swimmers love the liberated feeling they get from swimming outdoors – but the temperature difference will need getting used to and it's advisable to wear a wetsuit, which will help with body heat and give extra buoyancy.



Wear waterproof sunblock in the summer.



Outdoor water temperatures in the UK range from 14–20 degrees, so try swimming in an unheated lido first to get used to the cooler water.

If your swimmers have any cuts and grazes, cover them with waterproof plasters, to help prevent infection.

If the water smells, don't go in!

When swimmers first get in, get them to practise floating on their backs – tell them to relax and let the buoyancy of their wetsuits do the work.

Instruct your young people to lift their eyes out of the water every five strokes or so, and take in their surroundings so they don't lose their bearings.

ENSURE THAT...

YOU DO:

- Make sure you're warm before the swim
- Enter the water feet first
- Take lots of old clothes

YOU DON'T:

- Take part if you are unwell
- Jump straight into a hot shower or bath....sit in a warm room and warm up gradually.

On your first swim, don't go any further away from the shore than 10 strokes as you may tire easily.

SAFETY FIRST

- You should be able to swim 200m on your own confidently, and tread water for at least 60 seconds
- Take some warm, dry clothes to change into afterwards
- Never go into open water that isn't supervised



Acclimatise properly – instruct swimmers to enter the water slowly, splashing their face and hands with water etc.

There is limited visibility underwater when swimming outdoors, which can be unsettling, but everyone will get used to it. Advise your swimmers to wear goggles, or swim breaststroke with their head lifted up out of the water.

TIME NEEDED

60 minutes

BADGE



The Swimming Teachers' Association (STA) partners the Swimmer Staged Activity Badge

PARTNER



OUTCOMES

This activity will help your young people feel confident in open water and hone the skills they'll need to work towards their Swimmer Staged Activity Badge.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Suggest that your young people use a landmark to swim towards and, as they get more confident in the open water, increase their distances and the time spent in the water.

MORE INFORMATION

The STA is the world's largest swimming teaching and lifesaving organisation delivering high-quality training in swimming teaching, life-saving, first aid and leisure management. It is committed to preserving human life through the promotion of swimming, lifesaving and survival techniques. To find out more, visit scouts.org.uk/STA.

THE STA'S WATER SAFETY CODE

SPOT THE DANGERS

Swimmers may not be able to swim so well in cold water outdoors as in a warm pool.

TAKE SAFETY ADVICE

Know the area you're swimming in, pay attention to special flags and notices.

DON'T GO ALONE

Go with a leader. Most Districts have an activity coordinator.

LEARN HOW TO HELP

Tell your swimmers what to do in an emergency.

NEVER...

swim in rivers or abandoned quarries.

VISIT

scouts.org.uk/a-z for more advice.